



Regional Plan Association

... a research and planning agency supported by voluntary membership to promote the coordinated development of the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut Metropolitan Region.

235 East 45th Street • New York, New York 10017 • (212) 682-7750

NEWS RELEASE

No. 1276
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For Information Call:

Sheldon Pollack
(212) 682-7750 (office)
(212) P1 1-5748 (home)

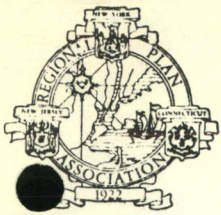
FOR RELEASE:
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CONTINUED SPREAD DEVELOPMENT WITH ABSENCE OF LAND USE POLICIES AND
STRONG REGIONAL PLANNING WILL LEAVE NEW YORK CITY, REGION WITH BLEAK FUTURE

Weaker Economy, Rising Unemployment, Exacerbated Social Problems
Only Result of Present Trends, Regional Plan President Warns

Attached is a copy of the remarks delivered by Dr. John P. Keith,
President of Regional Plan Association, at the invitational seminar
sponsored by Baruch College on November 7, 1975, New York Hilton Hotel,
New York City.

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NEW YORK IN PERSPECTIVE

By

Dr. John P. Keith
President
Regional Plan Association

Program of Baruch College
New York Hilton
November 7, 1975

To view New York in perspective requires a look back as well as forward, to see how we got into our present predicament and what our chances are of getting out.

In the late 1950's Regional Plan employed a team of consultants assembled by Harvard University under Raymond Vernon's direction. Although his population and employment projections were off target by 1970, the major thrust of his findings pointed to our present situation: a moveout of blue collar employment to the periphery of the Region and beyond; a rapid growth in white collar employment, much of it scattered throughout the suburbs; and a slow decay in the old central cities of the Region leaving large "gray areas," more thinly populated with the old and the poor.

Regional Plan recalculated Vernon's results on the basis of 1960 Census data applied it to the land using the zoning ordinances of its hundreds of municipalities as our guide. The report entitled Spread City projected great growth in the Region during the 60's, most of it in the far suburbs on office campuses and large lots. By

1970, that had occurred doubling the land urbanized in 1950.

Astonishingly, the Manhattan CBD held its own throughout the 60's despite the lure of the suburbs. Manhattan entered the decade with half the office space in the Region, and while we had projected that it might take a third of that decade's growth, it took its full half share. While our work on the Office Industry indicated the need for some 6 million square feet of office space annually, the building industry quadrupled the potential demand, leaving the City with a glut which is now being slowly absorbed.

The City along with the nation was hit by a severe recession in 1969. The nation recovered, only to slide again, but the City did not recover. As a result, nearly all of the 300,000 jobs added in the 60's were lost in the first years of the 70's.

Regional Plan warned of this decay of the Region's core in one of its Second Regional Plan volumes, Public Services in Older Cities, 1968. Its recommendation was to nationalize all poverty-linked costs and turn education costs over to the states. Neither has happened, though there have been attempts to do both. The present fiscal crisis provides an opportunity to achieve these goals.

As for the Second Regional Plan itself, which calls for collecting regional activities and services, such as offices, higher education, health and cultural institutions, department stores and the like, in downtowns, modest progress has been made in downtown

Brooklyn, Jamaica, Stamford, White Plains, Paterson, and others, but the stoppage of capital projects threatens their renaissance. So, not only New York City, but its companion regional centers are in jeopardy.

What is happening to us? When one looks deeper than the "fiscal gimmickry," so much deplored, tidal shifts in population and employment emerge: the New York Region reached Zero Population Growth precipitously last year, still we have a substantial labor force now growing up for whom jobs apparently will not be available, 400,000 in the next five years and double that number in the follow-up decade. This presents us with three alternatives: (1) create new kinds of private and public employment, (2) trust that the nation's economy can absorb these youthful workers elsewhere, or (3) watch welfare rolls continue to swell and guard against civil unrest.

We are not alone in this difficulty--only as usual ahead of the rest of the nation. RPA has recently published a volume Growth and Settlement in the U.S., which might well have been entitled "Spread Nation." It shows that the linear cities, predicted in the 50's have emerged in the 70's. Unlike the Census Bureau, which says that people are returning to rural America, this work indicates that urban areas of very low density are oozing across the countryside creating urban belts along the Eastern Seaboard with an arm running out to the Twin Cities, along the Gulf and Pacific Coasts, and through the mountain states from Arizona to Washington.

Where is all this leading us? Unless national growth and state land use policies are adopted, Spread Nation seems as inevitable as was Spread City. Furthermore, unless the New York Urban Region has somebody in charge, the continuance of Spread City to its final consequences, suggested fifteen years ago, seems irreversible. In other words, New York City's prospects are bleak even though it takes Herculean steps to save itself from default--UNLESS:

1. The energy shortage becomes severe enough to drive us to more concentrated working and living patterns. Then New York City, with 75 percent of the nation's rail commutation and 37 per cent of all its mass transportation could turn its density into an advantage. Our recent work on The Region's Energy Consumption shows that a resident of New York City uses half the energy per capita of the nation as a whole, largely due to mass transportation and pedestrian movement.

2. Environmentalists and minorities team up in their self interests to prevent further abuse of the countryside and to turn employment and residences back to the older areas of the Region, including the inner suburbs which are now feeling the same downturn in jobs and population as the cities. Otherwise, land will continue to be covered with scattered, non-city, non-rural growth, and the cities will run their course to become the home of the old, infirm and poor: the welfare depots of the country.

3. Controls on the use of land are devised and related to the public investment that creates its value, as is already being done in other states and countries. For example, Toronto carefully

controls growth of industry and apartments in relation to its transportation system. Unless this Region shapes its environs to benefit its cities, its core will continue to decline, as with Newark, and by 2000 the healthy suburbs will be pulled down with the decaying core. Signs of that are already apparent as the inner suburbs are beginning to lose both employment and people.

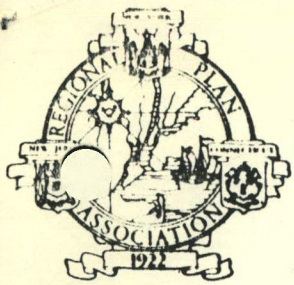
4. Capital remains scarce and we are constrained to utilize development in place, to make do and to retrofit rather than to build anew. If growth in private sector employment does not revive, large-scale public employment programs may well be called for. They could fulfill needs in human development, urban reconstruction, public transportation and improvement of the environment. All of these would lead to a renewed and competitive Region.

5. The pattern of federal expenditures changes. Generally, federal investment programs now favor smaller communities and those with lower densities, e.g., federally funded new construction averaged about 40 percent less per capita in metropolitan areas over one million, than in those with fewer than 250,000 persons; and those with 300 persons per square mile got 60 percent more federal investment than those with ten times that number of persons per square mile.

To accomplish all this, somebody will have to be in charge. Just as the Greater City of New York was put together in 1898 to cover the economy of that day, we are going to have to provide an overseer for the Region's redevelopment. Now, we have the Tri-State Regional Planning Commission, a start in that direction, but still an advisory body governed by the affected governmental agencies.

New York in Perspective - 6

Over the next decade, who governs the New York Region will emerge as a prime question and the answer will bear on how we utilize our still tremendous resources, and whether this "nine-lived cat," as Vernon referred to it has yet another rebirth.



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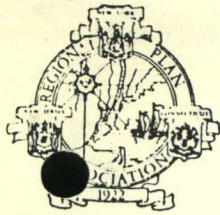
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